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Inventory for

Manuscript Collection
MS - 120

Captain Christopher O. Carter Papers

1858-c. 1893

by
Elisabeth Meier
March 2019

½ box
0.2 linear feet
Accession no. 2005.70.121

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Abstract

Carter, Christopher O., Captain (1836-1915)

Papers, 1858-c. 1893

Bulk dates: 1860-1870

½ box

Master mariner from Woolwich, Maine.

This collection contains two log-books, an account book, and a family diary from Captain Christopher Carter of Woolwich, Maine. It provides a detailed record of Carter's early career and life at sea as a mate and captain aboard the *Thalatta* (ship), *Whampoa* (ship), and *Monte Rosa* (ship) in the Atlantic and Cape Horn trades. The family diary includes the experiences of his wife, Margaret, and two daughters while at sea. There is also a folder of newspaper clippings of personal interest collected by the family.

Gift of Dr. Charles E. Burden.

MS-120. Accession #2005.70.121.

Finding aid (folder level control) in repository.

Added entries—persons:

Carter, Christopher O., Captain (1836-1915)
Carter, Margaret Edgecomb (1838-1909)
Stinson, Edward P.

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

Monte Rosa (ship)
Thalatta (ship)
Whampoa (ship)

Added entries—key terms:

Accounts
Cape Horn trade
Families at sea
Guano trade
Logbooks
Merchant mariners
Salt industry and trade
Ship captains
Ship captain's spouses
Ships
Ships – maintenance and repair

Acquisition

This collection was donated to the museum by Dr. Charles E. Burden in 2005.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on this collection.

Physical Condition

The text in all volumes of this collection is clear and readable, but the bindings are in varying levels of distress. The log of the *Thalatta* is missing three leaves near the end. The back cover on the log-book of the *Whampoa* and *Monte Rosa* is detached and the binding is loose. The end of the log-book is written on a hand-bound signature that was inserted loose at the end of the volume. The account book of the *Whampoa* and *Monte Rosa* is missing much of the marbled paper that once covered it, and some pages and signatures are coming loose in the diary.

The clippings are in reasonably good condition, but are acidic and ageing.

Related Materials

The museum has manuscript material from Christopher Carter's brother, Captain Edward L. Carter, in MS-4 and SM 49/5; his cousin, Captain Charles J. Carter, in MS-5; and another folder of material from Christopher himself as part of a group of family papers in MS-3.

The book *The Carters of Woolwich, Maine* by Avis Carter Gebert (Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2008) includes lengthy transcriptions of letters, diaries, and other family papers that are still in private hands. Christopher Carter and his seafaring career are well represented in the book.

A photograph of Christopher Carter, which arrived with this collection, has been filed in PC-3.

Historical Note

Christopher O. Carter (1836-1915) was born into a family of sea captains from Woolwich, Maine. His father, Charles William Carter, was a master mariner before he settled in Woolwich as a carpenter, and Christopher's brother, Edward L. Carter and cousin, Charles J. Carter, both had lengthy careers in command of Bath vessels.

Christopher O. Carter began his career at sea sometime in the 1850s. He sailed primarily in long-distance, globe-circling routes, like the New Orleans cotton trade, Chilean guano and nitrate trade, Australian wool trade, California grain trade, and coal and salt trades around Cape Horn.

Carter's first ship was the *Thalatta* of Bath. He quickly worked his way up to mate under Captain Edward P. Stinson. He joined the *Whampoa* (ship) as a mate in 1861 and took command when her captain retired in 1863. As a captain, Carter sailed the *Whampoa* from 1863 to 1873, the *Monte Rosa* (ship) from 1873 to 1880, the brand-new *E.P. Stinson* (ship) from 1881 to the late 1890s, and the *I.F. Chapman* (ship) until his retirement in 1900. Though his career was global, Carter principally worked for Gilbert C. Trufant and I.F. Chapman, merchants with strong Maine connections.

Christopher Carter married Margaret Edgecomb in 1862. They had five children: Edith Margaret (1866-1879), Abbie Fullerton (1868-1955), Jessie Christine (1871-1952), Isabell Edgecomb (1873-1958), and Edward E. (b. 1880). Margaret occasionally accompanied her husband to sea with some or all of the children; Edith and Jessie were both born aboard ship. The family eventually purchased a home at 45 Green Street in Bath, where Abigail and Isabell lived into the 1950s.

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains log-books, an account book, and a diary from the first half of Christopher Carter's career aboard the *Thalatta, Whampoa*, and *Monte Rosa*. Carter's notes provide a detailed record of business and life at sea. There is also a folder of clippings, presumably assembled by Carter and his family, from later in the nineteenth century.

Carter kept the log-book of the *Thalatta* when he was serving as mate under Captain E.P. Stinson in 1858 and 1859. In addition to standard entries about weather and sail handling, it contains a detailed record of daily work undertaken by the crew. The log of the *Whampoa* and *Monte Rosa*, kept when Carter was a captain, is in summary form, with prose descriptions of weather, sailing conditions, fishing and wildlife, ships in company, navigational concerns, and the progress of loading cargoes like guano. The account book for the *Whampoa* and *Monte Rosa* covers a similar period, with unusual detail about port expenses, crew wages, and gratuities paid to leadsmen, lightermen, and other dockside workers.

The final volume is a diary started by Christopher Carter before an 1877 voyage from Bristol, England to Adelaide, Australia on the *Monte Rosa*. He soon consigned the volume to his wife, Margaret, who accompanied him with their two youngest daughters. The majority of the entries, in Margaret's hand, are a charming record of family life at sea and in port.

The folder of clippings contains a variety of topics, from business to self-help to human interest stories. Many seem to pertain to specific interests of this branch of the Carter family, but there is no clear provenance.

Box and Folder List

Box	Folder	
1	1	Log-book, *Thalatta* (ship), 1858-1859, Captain E. P. Stinson
	2	Log-book, *Whampoa* (ship), 1870-1873; *Monte Rosa* (ship), 1873-1875
	3	Account book, *Whampoa* (ship), 1867-1873; *Monte Rosa* (ship), 1873-1880
	4	Family diary, *Monte Rosa* (ship), 1877
	5	Letter from Jessie Carter to her sisters, 1877. Removed from the family diary in folder 4.
	6	Newspaper clippings